

Farmers' Awareness and Perceptions in Agritourism Participation in Calaanan Bongabon Nueva Ecija: A basis of Marketing Development Plan

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Abstract—Agriculture is one of the top sources of livelihood of the residents of Calaanan Bongabon, Nueva Ecija, and since the area which is surrounded with great scenery, agritourism is slowly being introduced. With the potentials that agritourism has for the area and for the farmers, the researchers came to assess the awareness and perceptions of the farmers in agritourism participation in Calaanan, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija. The proponents derived the responses from twenty participants using quantitative research design. The result showed that there was high level of awareness to participate in agritourism specifically in awareness on the opportunity to develop connections to urban dwellers to rural culture and lifestyles. The farmers perceived agritourism as possible help to farmers to increase their standard of living. Moderate level of willingness to participate in agritourism was noted, this is due to challenges in lack of capital, the technical know-how on managing agritourism business, and unidentified target customers and others. This study has recommendations to address the challenges which may also be a basis of marketing development plan.

Keywords—Agritourism, awareness, perception, participation, challenges, development plan.

I. INTRODUCTION

A type of tourism known as agritourism, which focuses on intrinsic factors related to agriculture and takes advantage of the special characteristics of rural and agriculturally rich areas, is growing in popularity in practically every province. Farmers were one of the program's major beneficiaries. In addition, future caregivers may have employment alternatives due to agricultural tourism, which will minimize the demand for agricultural work. When it comes to the motivation behind farmers' decisions to welcome tourists to their farms, if this is viewed as an interventionist movement, it is unclear what compelled them to make this move. Farm tourism is commonly defined as the provision of a farm for recreational as well as leisure utilization, and the utilization of rural regions in the context of agritourism is crucial for both rural growth and long-term sustainability.

Moreover, agricultural tourism, often known as farm tourism, is becoming more and more significant as a rural growth strategy. Identifying and fixing systemic

weaknesses is crucial for the proper development of this expanding sector. According to Kilinc et al. (2018), creating additional jobs, alleviating poverty, and fostering the growth of the local economy are some of the positive effects of the contributions made by the tourism industry. Also, a significant increase in this industry benefits agritourism as well. As a result, innovations in agritourism are growing throughout most of the country, particularly in sectors related to animal production, farming, and heritage landmarks. First and foremost, it's essential that we prevent locals from emigrating to urban areas, especially the young population. Concurrently, find a solution to the disparities in living conditions between the rural and urban populations. The growth of rural communities can be greatly aided by the agritourism sector. In fact, rural America is one of the most promising regions for the expansion of the hospitality industry. The growth of local livelihoods must take into account the fact that domestic migration is not the only factor driving rural tourism. Due to the increased competition for coastal tourism and the scarcity of resources in non-coastal areas, agricultural

tourism is frequently favored. Hence, the fact that people living in rural areas have low incomes, poor working conditions, a high unemployment rate, and more seasonal jobs has naturally increased interest in rural tourism, which creates additional income for rural people, especially farmers. As stated by Brune, Knollenberg, & Moreno (2019), the prime objective of agritourism is to aid in a stable supply of revenues throughout the year and ultimately benefit the local dwellers and the nation's economy. It is undeniably true that an improvement in the living standards of the indigenous populace has a positive impact on the nation's economic health.

Farmers' objectives and traits are the driving factors of agritourism growth, as they are what make it sustainable. Since farmers' preparedness is the first crucial stage in the growth of agritourism, it is important to comprehend their willingness before any form of execution.

Furthermore, agritourism was rather linked to the driving forces behind farmers' urge for agriculture development. According to Tew and Barbieri (2012), the observed advantages of agritourism are common to many farm business and household characteristics; hence, it is essential to look into these characteristics because they influence farmers' perspectives. In addition to that, tourism-related variables, such as the profile of possible tourists and the responsibilities of full-time whereas for component farmers, that could have a significant impact on farmers' desires to start spice tourism, also weren't taken into consideration. These difficulties must be considered when creating a new tourist destination.

Thus, this study's objective is to ascertain whether farmers in developing countries without any existing agritourism ventures are willing to start up such ventures. Focusing on emerging economies is essential because farmers constitute a large proportion of the poor in these societies. In developing nations, agritourism is seen as a strategy for both rural development and eliminating poverty. Nevertheless, the majority of research on agritourism to date has been undertaken in economically advanced countries, concentrating on well-established agritourism locations. Subsequently, the fundamental objectives of this research were to investigate farmers' incentives and willingness prior to the development of agritourism in Calaanan, Bongabon Nueva Ecija.

Calaanan is a barangay in the municipality of Bongabon, in the Province of Nueva Ecija. Its population was about 3.85% or 2,575 in year 2020 census. Majority of the population are farmers, and farm owners. They are the producers of agricultural products such as rice, onion, corn, garlic and etc. Thus, many of the farm owners are connected to agritourism in the said municipality because they are

aware that Bongabon is one of the tourist spots in the province of Nueva Ecija. They foster a greater appreciation and awareness between a traveler, the land visited and the people who live on it.

With this notion, the study aims to determine the farmers' awareness and perceptions in participation in agritourism in Calaanan, Bongabon Nueva Ecija.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to determine the level of awareness, perceptions and willingness of farmers to participate in agritourism in Calaanan, Bongabon Nueva Ecija as basis of marketing development plan.

Specifically, it will seek to answer to the following questions:

1. How may the profile of farmers be described in terms of:
 - 1.1. age;
 - 1.2. sex;
 - 1.3. civil status;
 - 1.4. highest educational attainment;
 - 1.5. number of children;
 - 1.6. occupation;
 - 1.7. monthly income; and
 - 1.8. farming land area in hectare?
2. How may the level of awareness of farmers to participate in Agritourism in terms of:
 - 2.1. Revenue;
 - 2.2. diversifying business;
 - 2.3. economic influx; and
 - 2.4. opportunity to develop connections?
3. How may the perceptions of farmers in agritourism be described in terms of:
 - 3.1. Importance;
 - 3.2. Barriers; and
 - 3.3. Benefits?
4. What is the level of willingness of farmers be described in participating in agritourism?
5. Is there a significant relationship between profile of respondents in awareness and perceptions?
6. Is there a significant difference between the level of awareness and perceptions of farmers about agritourism?
7. Based on the findings of the study, what marketing development plan may propose?

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant relationship between profile of respondents in awareness and perceptions.
2. There are no significant differences between the level of awareness and perceptions of farmers about agritourism.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

The researchers utilized quantitative research design to determine the level of awareness and willingness of farmers to participate in agritourism in Calaanan, Bongabon Nueva Ecija. The respondents of the study are the 20 farm owners and they were selected using purposive sampling to meet the objectives of the study.

A personally develop survey questionnaire were used as research instrument to gathered the needed data. Since the tool is personally developed it undergone to pilot testing and content validity using CronBach Alpha. The reliability and validity results was 0.94 which means high reliability and validity.

In data gathering, the researchers personally administered the survey so that they can extract honest and reliable responses. Before they give the survey, they discussed and explained the importance and objectives of the study.

The survey questionnaire consisted of Four-point Likert scale as shown below:

Rating Scale	Weights Assigned	Interpretation	Description
4	3.25 – 4.00	High Level	Strongly Agree
3	2.50 – 3.24	Moderate Level	Agree
2	1.75 – 2.49	Fair Level	Disagree
1	1.00 – 1.74	Low Level	Strongly Disagree

And all data gathered were statistically treated using SPSS tool.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Profile of Farmers

Based on the findings gathered, majority of the farmers at Calaanan, Bongabon Nueva Ecija were at age range of 45 to 55 years old, indicating that the majority of them were still in their working years. The respondents are by their fairly productive ages, better positioned to go about their farming activities with much ease.

Most are male and married with 4 to 5 children. This implies that majority of the respondents had fair household size, which is within the national average of 4 persons. Also, marriage predisposes an individual to become more responsible since they must cater for their family needs. This finding is also in line with Ominikari, Onumadu and Nnamerenwa (2017) posited that being married confers some amount of stability to an individual in a household.

In terms of education, majority of the respondents reached college levels. They own the farmland they cultivate. Most of them have 2 to 4 hectares. Their income depends on the status of the cropping period and land area.

The findings meant that most of the farmers in Calaanan, Bongabon were farm owners. Their monthly income is not fixed since they are dependent on the cropping season. This level of annual income is not sufficient enough to make farmers in the area to be seen as a more profitable occupation. This finding is consistent with the finding of Hamadina and Hamadina (2015) who opined that income from farming activities is often low and affects the poverty status of small holder farmers. This finding is also consistent with the finding of Chukwuneye (2016) and Onu (2016) who in their studies observed low annual income status among farmers.

2. Level of Awareness of Farmers to Participate in Agritourism

Table 1. Level of Awareness to Participate in Agritourism

Level of Awareness	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Revenue	3.13	Moderate Level
Diversifying Business	2.76	Moderate Level
Economic Influx	3.53	High Level
Opportunity to Develop Connections	3.65	High Level
Overall Weighted Mean	3.27	High Level

Table 1 shows the data on the level of awareness of farmers to participate in agritourism. As shown in the table the overall weighted mean got 3.27 and verbally interpreted as “High Level”. The opportunity to develop connections got the highest weighted mean of 3.65 and verbally interpreted as “High Level”, whereas diversifying business got the lowest weighted mean of 2.76 and interpreted as “Moderate Level”.

The findings meant that farmers in Calaanan, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija had found high level of awareness to participate in agritourism specifically in awareness on the opportunity to develop connections to urban dwellers to rural culture and lifestyles. They foster connections through research-based knowledge and education to learn to produce agricultural products and promoting entrepreneurial spirit linked in rural areas. Thus, resulting to offer agritourism opportunities that widely recognized economic benefits of participating Agritourism specially for rural areas.

According to Phillips (2010), many farms around the country are diversifying their offerings and enhancing profitability by adding agritourism. He stated that agritourism is an enterprise at a working farm or agriculture plant conducted for the enjoyment of visitors that generates income for the owner. It has more benefits such as creating name recognition for their agricultural products, educating consumers about farming, generating financial incentives for the protection and enhancement of farms and natural amenities and generating spillover economic development opportunities.

3. Perceptions of Farmers in Agritourism

Table 2. Perceptions of Farmers in Agritourism

Perceptions	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Importance	3.44	High Level
Barriers	3.45	High Level
Benefits	3.33	High Level
Overall Weighted Mean	3.41	High Level

Table 2 presents the data on the perceptions of farmers in agritourism. As shown, the overall weighted mean got 3.41 and verbally interpreted as "High Level". Barriers on perceptions of farmers in agritourism got highest weighted mean of 3.45, followed by importance of 3.44 and benefits of 3.33 and all with verbal interpretations of "High Level".

The findings revealed that the perceptions of farmers in Agritourism in Calaanan Bongabon, Nueva Ecija were found high level in all aspects.

In terms of barriers, the farmers perceptions are in high level in the involvement of capital and difficulty to attract shareholders and customers. But they understand in the importance and benefits of agritourism to help farmers to increase their standard of living that create more employment opportunity and generate additional income in the community. And to promote economic growth and

development and avenues to escape poverty for the majority of the families in Calaanan, Bongabon.

The findings were supported by World Nomads (n.d.), claimed that agritourism had significant impact to the revenue, diversifying business and providing a stable income for the farmers. It also helps the community to preserve their local food and traditions and protects farmland from developers.

4. Level of Willingness of Farmers in Participating in Agritourism

Based on the responses of the respondents-farmers, majority of them rated 5 to 6 their willingness to participate in agritourism which means moderate level of willingness.

Because on the other side, they are not ready to participate due to different reasons such as capital, managing business in agritourism form, target customers and many more.

In the study of Bhatta, Itagaki & Ohe (2019), revealed that farmers' willingness to participate in agritourism is statistically determined in farmer age group those aged between 20 to 40 because they are significant connections between agritourism-related element and agricultural sharing. Additionally, willingness to participate in agritourism was affected by different factors such as level of education, gender and social activities. Specifically, those who are oriented towards land sharing are relatively eager to participate, relatively educated and more likely to be men because they are on decision making in line with the farming activities.

5. Relationship between Profile of Respondents and Level of Awareness and Perceptions in Participating Agritourism

Highest educational attainment of farmers had significant relationship with the level of awareness and perceptions in Agritourism participation. And other profile variables had found no significant relationship.

The findings meant that the highest educational level of farmers the better their awareness and perceptions and more likely to participate in agritourism.

In similar to the results of study of Bagi and Reeder (2012) revealed that the higher the level of education of the farmers, the more likely their participation in agritourism. This may be because uneducated or less educated farmers are ignorant of the benefits of agritourism and community activities.

6. Differences between the Level of Awareness and Perceptions of Farmers about Agritourism

Based on the findings, there is no significant differences on the level of awareness and perceptions of farmers about Agritourism.

The findings revealed that farmers have the same level of awareness and perceptions in participating agritourism. They are all agreed that agritourism helps farmers in the community to increase income, to have more job opportunities and preserved farmland and foster more connections.

7. Output of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers may propose marketing development plan to strengthen agritourism in Calanan, Bongabon, Nueva Ecija. It also helps farmers to strengthen and heighten level of awareness and perceptions to participate in Agritourism.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

On the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that farmers in Calanan, Bongabon Nueva Ecija shows high level of awareness and perceptions in agritourism. They are willing to participate agritourism as long as they are aware on the benefits to the farm owners and community and will be given the proper support and training.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the researchers recommended to understand well the agritourism business. Farmers should attend more seminars and trainings that could help them enlighten and increase the knowledge and awareness in agritourism business that surely satisfy goals and target markets. And should have development plan and programs before entering to any agritourism business leading to better agritourism participation.

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